

Indian Religions in Early Seventeenth-Century European Thought

Seventeenth-century European encyclopaedic works on the religions of the world typically dealt with their subject matter within a fourfold categorial scheme. In addition to Christianity, there were separate categories for Judaism and for Islam (i. e. 'Mahumetanisme', 'Saracenicall' or 'Moorish' religion etc.), religions long known to western writers.¹ The fourth category was a vague entity referred to as 'Heathenism', 'Paganism', 'Superstition', 'Gentilism' or 'Idolatry', these terms being used more or less interchangeably. This type of classification is set out explicitly in works such as Edward Brerewood's *Enquiries touching the Diversity of Languages and Religions through the Chiefe Parts of the World* (1614), Alexander Ross's *Pansebeia: or, a view of all religions in the world* (1653) and Richard Baxter's *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* (1667).² In the fourth category was placed virtually any form of religion not obviously Jewish, Christian or Islamic, sometimes including the dead religions of Europe's past. Where this category was subdivided, it was on a geographical basis, and it is here that the religions of India were to be found. While the religion of the ancient Indians is treated in these works as a unitary entity, contemporary Indian religion is discussed under the rubric of the religions of the inhabitants of particular regions of India. Thus Ross, following his section on the 'religion of the ancient Indians', discusses separately the religions of Siam, Pegu (Burma), Bengala, Magor, Cambaia (Gujarat), Goa, Malabar, Narsingar and Bisnagar (Vijayanagara), Japon, the Philippiana Islands, Sumatra and Zeilan (Ceylon).³ This treatment arises in part from the nature of the sources on which the compilers of these works relied.

For his account of religion in India Ross, whose work was first published in 1653, did not use the most recently-published works on

¹ For examples see Pailin 1984, chapter V 'The treatment of Judaism' and chapter VI 'The treatment of Islam.'

² Brerewood writes: 'There are foure sorts or sects of Religion, observed in the sundrie regions of the World. Namely, Idolatrie, Mahumetanisme, Judaisme and Christianity.' (Brerewood 1614: 79. Cf. Baxter 1667: 198). Ross's categories diverge slightly from those of Brerewood and Baxter. Ross states that of all the religions in the world some 'are meerly Heathenish, some Jewish, some meerly Christian, some mixed, either of all, or some of these'. So in the fourth category we find 'Mahometanism' as a mixture of Judaism, 'Gentilism', and the Christian heresy 'Arrianism'. Ross 1696: 363.

³ Ross 1696: Contents.

India such as Henry Lord's *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects* (1630) or Abraham Roger's *De Open-Deure tot het Verborgene Heydendom* (1651). Instead Ross relied upon the earlier works of another Englishman, Samuel Purchas, and another Dutchman, Jan Huygen van Linschoten, together with the reports of Portuguese travellers and traders. Although Purchas was not a traveller, his work was a compilation of traveller's tales; the main source of information concerning the religions of the inhabitants of India in *Purchas His Pilgrimes, or Hakluytus Posthumus* is the 1615 voyage to India of Edward Terry. Linschoten travelled throughout the region then known as "the East Indies" between 1583 and 1589, publishing an account of his voyages in 1596. The structure of encyclopaedic works like Ross's is partly dictated by the use of traveller's accounts, rather than the works of Lord and Roger which are descriptions of the religious beliefs and practices of the inhabitants of one particular geographical region.

The memoirs of voyages used by compilers like Ross typically proceed sequentially from one region to another, describing the religion of the region along with the topography, trade, rulers and anything else thought noteworthy. Although produced in the late sixteenth century, at a time when, according to Michael Biggs, a new and characteristically modern cartographical mode of representation had begun to emerge, Linschoten's work is closer to the genre of medieval itineraries which recorded 'the route and time taken to travel between places – without any attempt to indicate their relative position.'⁴ So Linschoten treats the religion of 'the Heathens, Indians and other strangers dwelling in Goa' separately from that of 'the Gusrates, and Banianes of Cambaia' or 'the Canaras and Decanijns'.⁵ While both Linschoten and Ross, who perpetuated and extended Linschoten's geographical classification, were aware of, or at least suspected, that there was some relationship between these groups, they had no clear idea of that relationship. For Linschoten the 'Idolatrie, ceremonies, and superstitions [of the 'Malabares'] are like the other heathens [in India]'⁶ while for Ross the religion of Japan is 'the same Gentilism that is professed in the rest of the Indies, with some variation of ceremonies.'⁷ What both lacked, we might say, was a modern map – a conceptual framework which would allow them to clarify the relationship between these groups by indicating their position relative to one another.

By contrast to contemporary religions of India, the religion of 'the ancient people of India' is treated as a unity, largely because it is described on the basis of different sources. The other primary source of

⁴ Biggs 1999: 377.

⁵ Linschoten 1885: 222.

⁶ Linschoten 1885: 278.

⁷ Ross 1696: 63.

information about India and its religions for the earliest modern writers on religions were the reports of Western antiquity, and as a source for the religion of the ancient Indians in particular these classical reports retained their importance despite the proliferation of travel literature from the sixteenth century onwards. For prior to gaining access to ancient Indian texts, and with archaeology still in its infancy, seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century accounts of ancient Indian religion continue to be drawn almost exclusively from western classical sources. In his section entitled 'Of India in general and of the ancient Rites there observed', Purchas describes 'the ancient People of India' on the authority of western classical authors including Strabo, Megasthenes, and Arrian. For Ross the classical and contemporary accounts are sufficiently similar for him to identify the contemporary 'Bramanes' as 'the successors of the old Brachmanes' reported by the Greeks,⁸ but he still separates the religion of contemporary inhabitants of the different regions of India from the 'religion of the ancient Indians' and from each other. Each comprised a subdivision of the category of 'Heathenism'.

While the fourfold classification of the world's religions was to persist in some European works for at least another two and a half centuries,⁹ already in the seventeenth century it had begun to be undermined by the appearance of more specialized works on the religions in the fourth category and it was quickly abandoned by the authors of these works. Such works suggested both that some of the systems of religious beliefs and practices that were lumped together in this category were at least as different from each other as they were from, say, Islam, and that others which had been separated on the basis of geography were in fact better thought of as one religion. We can see this on an individual level in the writings of William Carey. As late as 1792 (but before he went to India) Carey still identifies four types of religion: 'Christian, Jewish, Mahometan and Pagan.'¹⁰ However, once Carey was in India he soon discarded the fourfold classification.¹¹ While the fourfold classification persisted in some European works until long into the nineteenth century, in works on Indian religions the beginnings of the process by which it

⁸ Ross 1696: 61.

⁹ Jonathan Z. Smith cites several examples of the fourfold categorization in nineteenth-century book titles; the latest is Vincent Milner, *Religious Denominations of the World: Comprising a General View of the Origin, History and Condition of the Various Sects of Christians, the Jews, and Mahometans, As Well as the Pagan Forms of Religion Existing in the Different Countries of the Earth* (1872). Smith 1998: 275.

¹⁰ Carey 1991: 64.

¹¹ 'Hindooism' is mentioned in the *Circular Letters of the Serampore Mission* VIII (May 1815): 100. The Baptist missions had by this time also encountered Parsis, Jains and Buddhists. See Potts 1967: 39.

came to be replaced can be traced back to the early decades of the seventeenth century.

The concept of Hinduism

Although the term 'Hindooism' itself is not used until late in the eighteenth century,¹² it will here be argued that it appears then not as the beginning but as the culmination of a process of concept-formation which had been underway for an extended period. In 1616, Terry had contrasted the 'notorious Idolaters, called in generall Hindoos' with the 'Mahometans' with whom they have been mixed 'ever since they were subdued by Tamberlaine'.¹³ In the same year, the term '*Bramanismo*' is used in a treatise on Hinduism in Portuguese by Gonçalo Fernandes Trancoso.¹⁴ '*Gentilisme*' is used in a 1722 letter in French from Etienne le Gac,¹⁵ and 'Gentooism' on the spine of a 1779 work in English by Jonathan Zephaniah Holwell.¹⁶ Each of these concepts, and others such as 'the Banian religion', contributed to the construction of a concept of a single pan-Indian Hindu religious tradition which is first established in the works of the eighteenth-century French Jesuits on 'the system of religion recognized among the Indians'.¹⁷ The process by which this

¹² It was in use by the 1780s. Charles Grant uses the term, without any sign that it is a neologism, in a letter to John Thomas written in the early months of 1787: 'In case of converting any of the Natives, as soon as they renounce Hindooism, they must suffer a dreadful excommunication in civil life, unless they are under the immediate protection of the English.' Quoted in Henry Morris, *The Life of Charles Grant*, London: John Murray, 1904: 105. Grant also uses the term in his 'Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to Morals, and on the means of Improving It. Written chiefly in the year 1792.' *Parliamentary Papers*, 1812–13, X, Paper 282: 1–112. I am grateful to Geoffrey Oddie for drawing my attention to Grant's use of the term.

¹³ Edward Terry, *A Relation of a Voyage to the Easterne India* in Purchas 1905, vol. 9: 29.

¹⁴ Discussed below, p.63.

¹⁵ Gobien *et al.* 1702–1776, vol. XVI (1724): 294.

¹⁶ The spine of the Cambridge University Library copy of Holwell 1779 is marked 'Holwell's Gentooism'. The French 'Gentil' and the English 'Gentoo' (or, rarely, 'Gentile') were widely used to the end of the eighteenth century to refer to the non-Muslim population of India. Both are corruptions of the Portuguese *gentio*, which in turn derives from the Latin *gentilis*. (Yule and Burnell 1996, and *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) s. v. 'Gentoo'.)

¹⁷ 'le système de Religion reçu parmi les Indiens' Jean Venant Bouchet à M. l'ancien Evêque d'Avranches. Gobien *et al.* 1702–1776, vol. IX (1730): 5. The published letter is undated but it is placed before the letters from 1709 in a later edition of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* which reorganized the letters chronologically within the regions of Asia. See *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères. Nouvelle*

concept came to be constructed will be traced through an examination of four works or collections of works by English, Dutch, German and French authors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: Henry Lord's *A Display of Two Forraigne Sects in the East Indies* (1630), Abraham Roger's *De Open-Deure tot het verborgen Heydendom* (1651), the works of Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Johann Ernst Gründler of the Danish-Halle mission at Tranquebar from the first two decades of the eighteenth century and the works of the Jesuits of the Carnatic mission from the end of the seventeenth century to 1776.¹⁸

The examination of these works provides a coverage of early European accounts of Indian religions that is both linguistically and chronologically wide-ranging. There are, however, many other works that might have been considered, both in other languages and in other periods, among them those of Jacobo Fenicio, Roberto Nobili, Gonçalo Fernandes Trancoso, Philip Baldaeus, Jean-Jacques Tessier de Quéralay, Thomas de Poitiers, Jonathan Zephaniah Holwell, Alexander Dow, Charles Wilkins, William Jones, Henry Thomas Colebrooke, Horace Hayman Wilson.¹⁹ Some of these works will be referred to where appropriate; those that will be examined in detail have been chosen above all for the importance of the contribution they made to the formation of the concept of Hinduism. This in turn has meant restricting consideration to works that were either published (Lord, Roger, some of the works of the Tranquebar and Carnatic missions), or widely circulated in manuscript (the major works of Ziegenbalg, some works of Jean-Venant Bouchet and Gaston-Laurent Cœurdoux) before 1780.

Although it will be stressed that the concept of Hinduism is the result of a process of development, it is not suggested that this was a single, continuous process. Lord, Roger and Ziegenbalg worked to a very large extent in isolation from other European works on Hinduism, and each stresses the originality of his work. However, two tendencies which together undermined the fourth category ('heathenism') of the fourfold classification are evident in differing degrees in these writers. The first is the identification of difference and plurality in the religious adherence of Indians; where evidence of recognition of such difference appears in their

édition. *Mémoires des Indes*. A Paris, Chez J. G. Merigot le jeune, Libraire, Quai des Augustins, au coin de la rue Pavée, 1781, vol. XI.

¹⁸ 1776 marks both the publication of the final volume of the *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses* and the likely compilation of Cœurdoux's *Mœurs et Coutumes des Indiens*. See Chapter 7.

¹⁹ Among other languages, there were important works in Portuguese and Latin. Although Indian religions were of course described in sixteenth-century works and in many nineteenth-century works, it was the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which saw the emergence of the concept of Hinduism as a unified pan-Indian tradition. For further details of the works of the authors listed, see the first section of the bibliography.

works it will be noted. The second is the identification of similarity and unity in religious belief and practice which, however, is not extended to all of India in the earliest of these writers. The first led to the abandonment of 'heathenism' as a category, the second to the formation of 'Hinduism' as the first of the major categories with which 'heathenism' was eventually replaced. In the case of the French Jesuits these tendencies were reinforced by their participation in a network of communication about Indian traditions which extended spatially across India (and to the learned institutions of Europe) and temporally across the whole of the period considered here: from the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Hinduism was known only from the reports of the ancients or of travellers like Linschoten, to the late eighteenth century, when the term 'Hinduism' was coined to represent a new object of European knowledge.

Roberto Nobili

Before turning to the first of the four groups of works which shaped the European conception of Hinduism, we will begin with one of the earliest and probably the greatest of the Jesuit writers on the religions of India, Roberto Nobili (1577–1656).²⁰ Although Nobili's knowledge of Indian languages and of Hindu religious beliefs and practices certainly surpassed that of the other seventeenth-century writers to be considered here, his treatises on Indian religion, such as the *Narratio Fundamentorum*²¹ and the *Informatio*,²² were not published.²³ The importance of his works for our purposes lies not so much in their direct contribution to European

²⁰ Josef Wicki suggests that although the form 'Roberto de Nobili' has become familiar, he usually referred to himself as Nobili, and as 'de Nobili' only when writing in Latin (cf. Neill 1984: 484).

²¹ *Narratio Fundamentorum quibus Madurensis Missionis Institutum caeptum est et hucusque consisit* [An exposition of the basic principles which inspired the founding of the Madurai Mission and continue to guide it. 1619], ed. S. Rajamanickam, trans. J. Pujo, *Adaptation*. Palayamkottai: De Nobili Research Institute, 1971. All quotations in English from this work are from the translation of J. Pujo in Rajamanickam's bilingual edition.

²² *Informatio de quibusdam moribus nationis indicæ* [Information concerning certain Indian customs. 1613]. ed. S. Rajamanickam, trans. Peter Leonard, *Roberto de Nobili on Indian Customs*. Palayamkottai: De Nobili Research Institute, 1972. A revised version of the English translation appeared in Nobili 2000. All quotations from this work are from the translation of Peter Leonard in Rajamanickam's 1972 bilingual edition.

²³ They were, however, copied and circulated in Rome and India by his supporters in the rites debate and their most significant influence was in shaping later Jesuit approaches to Hinduism. The Jesuits of the Carnatic Mission not only adopted Nobili's strategy of adaptation, with important consequences for their knowledge of Hinduism, but they would also have known Nobili's treatises in defence of his method. See below, Chapter 7.

conceptions of Hinduism, but in their conclusive demonstration that, *pace* Stietenron, not all early European missionaries in India treated Hinduism as a single religion and that, at least in Nobili's case, his Christian worldview predisposed him to argue precisely the opposite. Not only does Nobili have no conception of Hinduism as a pan-Indian religion, he explicitly asserts that the non-Muslim inhabitants of India have several different religions. Examination of Nobili's works will also serve to demonstrate that whatever preconceptions of Indian religions Europeans brought to India with them, there were at least some writers who were forced by their encounter with Indian religious beliefs and practices to abandon their preconceptions. Although the concept of a unified Hindu religious tradition does eventually emerge, this happens only as the result of a sustained study of those religions. The first response of authors such as Nobili, Lord and others was to identify a *plurality* of religions in India, which undermined the conventional fourfold categorial scheme.

Nobili's works were part of a wave of Jesuit reports on Hinduism in the first decades of the seventeenth century.²⁴ Joan-Pau Rubiés argues that the motivation for these works lay in a crisis of missionary methods: before 1580, he writes, 'clerical attitudes of utter and offensive contempt' produced 'a general consensus among clerical writers to ignore gentile mythology' while at the same time 'there was no real room for a lay discourse on gentile religion to challenge the clerical monopoly'.²⁵ The crisis arose because the missions in India, China and Japan were not operating under the same degree of imperial protection as those in the New World and faced the problem of how to evangelize free nations. Although tolerated at the courts of Akbar in the north and Venkata II in the south, the missionaries were disappointed by the lack of conversions. In response to this problem the Jesuits developed the innovative strategy of 'accommodation' or 'adaptation' to Indian social customs and as a consequence engaged in the serious study of Indian religion required for both the practice and the defence of the strategy. Thus Nobili's works on Hinduism were not written to inform Europe about the *religions* of India,²⁶ except insofar as such knowledge served the main purpose of these works, which was to justify the practice of 'accommodation' or 'adaptation' in the Madurai mission from 1606. Nobili, following to some extent the principles of the Jesuit mission in China of Matteo Ricci, allowed Brahman converts to continue in certain practices which, he

²⁴ For a brief description of other works besides those discussed here, see Rubiés 2000: 315–6. Rubiés has also provided a more detailed account of one of these works, Antonio Rubino's *Relatione d'alchune cose principali del regno de Bisnagà* (1608) (Rubiés 2001).

²⁵ Rubiés 2000: 313.

²⁶ The plural is used advisedly, see below, p.62.

argued, were only signs of ‘a certain social and political rank’, and not implicated in ‘idolatry’.²⁷

The accommodation strategy had a range of implications: for the missionaries it meant adopting the dress and lifestyle of a *sannyāsin* and for converts it meant toleration of certain practices which, it was argued, had social and not only religious significance, and which, purged of their superstitious meaning, could be allowed within the Christian community in order to reduce the resistance of the higher classes to conversion. The practices included wearing the brahmanic thread and the *kudumi* (tuft of hair), the use of sandal paste, certain ablutions, and the use by Hindu women of the *tāli*, a necklace, instead of a ring as a sign of marriage. In language, accommodation meant the Christianization and use of terms such as *piracādam*, *kōvil* and even *pūjai* rejected by earlier missionaries such as Henrique Henriques because of their associations with Hinduism.²⁸ While study of Indian vernaculars had always been a part of missionary strategy, for Nobili at least, accommodation required also the serious study of Hindu thought, particularly Vedānta.

As is well known, Nobili’s strategy provoked what became known as the ‘Malabar rites’ controversy.²⁹ Nobili was first denounced in 1610 by Gonçalo Fernandes Trancoso, a man who – apart from the fact that he was also a Jesuit – could scarcely have been less like Nobili. In contrast to the young, intellectually gifted Italian nobleman who had been in India only five years and was engaged in an experimental mission to the high castes in Madurai, Fernandes was a Portuguese former soldier of modest background, who had entered the Society in India more than half a century previously. His education was limited and his work had been in the oldest fields of the Jesuit missions in Goa and the Fishery Coast before he had been sent to Madurai in 1595 to work among Paravas. As the dispute gathered momentum, Fernandes in 1616 wrote ‘a synopsis of the ceremonies and way of life of the Brahmans’ in answer to Nobili’s works in defence of accommodation.³⁰ In it he notes that the way of life of the *sannyāsin*, as well as the ceremonies connected to the *kudumi*, the receiving of the sacred thread and weddings are prescribed in the Veda.³¹ He argues that the status of the Brahmans, the guardians of the Veda, is therefore religious rather than social, and the distinctive marks of their

²⁷ Nobili 1971: 103.

²⁸ See Rajamanickam 1967.

²⁹ The issue was initially resolved in favour of Nobili by the 1623 bull of Gregory XV, *Romanae Sedis Antistes*, but the debate was revived in the first part of the next century and finally went against the Jesuits.

³⁰ *Sumário das serimónias e modo de proceder dos bramanes destas partes da India conforme a suas lleis e doutrinas dos seus doutores* (Fernandes 1973).

³¹ Fernandes 1973: 2.

caste, including the thread and *kudumi* are religious and not merely social symbols.

Recent scholars have seen in the debate over accommodation between Nobili and Fernandes evidence of changes in European self-understanding underway in the period. For Iñes Županov, Nobili's aristocratic perspective is representative both of a humanist theological universalism which sought to uncover in the unknown analogies to the known and of a social position not threatened by this procedure. Fernandes, by contrast, represents for Županov a class of Europeans who, conscious of their social inferiority, found in the colonial enterprise the possibility of promotion through the discrimination of groups both different from and inferior to themselves. As a result they looked at India differently, in ways which for Županov anticipate contemporary emic and etic approaches in anthropology, Fernandes perceiving 'a classifiable diversity where Nobili saw basic uniformity.'³² For Rubiés on the other hand while the dispute is at heart more theological than social or national, the question of the degree of overlap between cultural and religious identity is to be understood within European debates arising from the shattering of 'the quasi-identification of the civil and religious spheres which had sustained European self-confidence from the late Middle Ages to the Renaissance'.³³ He concludes: 'The debate about Indian religion was then really a debate about Christianity'.³⁴ Nevertheless Nobili's position in the accommodation debate – and by extension the debate about Christian religious and social identity – was dependent upon a conception of Hindu religious belief and practice as representing *different religions*.

For Nobili the thread and tuft of hair could be shown to be 'social, not religious insignia' because they were used by a plurality of sects who 'entirely disagree with one another in the question of religion' and therefore shared the thread and tuft as a mark of social rank and not religious adherence. Another Jesuit, Andrea Bucerio, had criticized an earlier treatise of Nobili on this point, arguing that the 'gentile sects, although contrary to one another, agree in one thing, and thus may have a common sign ... they all worship, not the true God, but the idols; hence, the string is the badge of idols in common.'³⁵ Nobili responds by asking, 'will the Christians, the Jews and the Turks ever choose a common emblem to signify that they all believe in one God? But whatever it will be elsewhere, among our gentiles, it is inconceivable; for their sects are so opposed to one another, that one sect will refuse to use a word, which

³² Županov 1999: 116.

³³ Rubiés 2000: 317.

³⁴ Rubiés 2000: 340.

³⁵ Nobili 1971: 93.

perfectly applies to its divinity, if it is already used by another sect ... The conclusion is inevitable, that the string is not a religious emblem, for if it were, it would not be worn by sects so opposed to one another.³⁶

In expounding his point, Nobili sets out an explicit account of three types of religious difference, identifying the kind of differences found between religions in India as the most fundamental of these. The first is variations in the mode of life of 'one and the same sect', for example Christian religious orders, who can of course use a common symbol because they are of one faith. The second is the type of difference between Catholics and 'heretics' who can nevertheless use the same symbols (baptism, the cross) because they are still called Christian. The third is the difference arising from worship of different gods.

Now, it is concerning this last case that I said: it is morally impossible that these sects agree in a common religious symbol. For every act of worship is addressed to a determinate god; but if the god is indeterminate, that is, if it is not this or that god in particular, the act of worship will also be indeterminate, and consequently there cannot be any one definite religious emblem. *Now, it is this last kind of difference which is to be found among the sects of the people here.* Therefore the string cannot possibly be a symbol of divinity common to all.³⁷

Thus when Nobili writes 'these people follow one common way of life, but many religions',³⁸ it is clear that he means that among Hindus who use the thread and tuft there are religious differences which go beyond the type of religious difference between Catholic and other Christians, and even beyond that between 'the Christians, the Jews and the Turks [who] ... all believe in one God'.³⁹ Nobili certainly perceived similarities among the Hindus, but the requirements of his theological argument on the accommodation strategy led him to insist on the fundamental nature of their religious differences.⁴⁰ Ironically then, insofar as his theological

³⁶ Nobili 1971: 95.

³⁷ Nobili 1971: 95–7 [emphasis added]

³⁸ 'hi populi unum habeant civilem cultum, religionem vero multiplicem' Nobili 1971: 112/113. Although the phrase translated by Pujo as 'one common way of life, but many religions' might also be translated as 'one common way of life, but a [single] manifold religion', it is clear from Nobili's discussion of religious difference among the Hindus that Pujo's interpretation of this sentence is to be preferred.

³⁹ Nobili 1971: 95. In contrast among the Hindus 'each sect adores a god peculiar to itself' (Nobili 1971: 97).

⁴⁰ Cf. Nobili's *Informatio de quibusdam moribus nationis indiae*: 'the sect of the Atheists cannot be said to be an unorthodox offspring of the sects of the idolaters ... these sects do not agree in any of their tenets, just as the sects of the Gnanis have nothing in common with these same idolaters' (Nobili 1972: 36–7). The 'Atheists' are Buddhists ('Bauddha matam or Nasticam'). In the *Narratio Fundamentorum* Nobili identifies the 'Gnani' as 'the Vedantam sect called Gnani or Spiritual men' (Nobili 1972: 117), however he places the 'Mayavadis', the 'Tadvavadis' and the 'Visnuvas' – the followers

preconceptions may be thought to have influenced Nobili's view of Hinduism – and his direct experience of and engagement with Indian religions was surely far more important – far from compelling him to a monolithic concept of Hinduism, they had in his case precisely the opposite effect. By contrast Fernandes, while he is far from having a conception of Hinduism as a single, pan-Indian religion, refers to the Hindus' beliefs and practices in a way which is at least suggestive of greater uniformity. In his *Sumário* Fernandes refers to the 'maquina do Bramanismo'.⁴¹ Županov comments that '[by] the 16th [sic] century the term *máquina*, meaning primarily an invention and a tool, also meant a fabricated object, generally complex and used for transforming energy, a system. It was also used in readymade expressions such as a "war machine". It was probably all of these meanings – an invention, a fabrication (in a pejorative sense also), a system, and a war machine – that Fernandes, an ex-soldier, was hinting at.'⁴² However although his use of 'Bramanismo' seems to indicate that Fernandes has some conception of the religion of the Brahmans as a unified system, he lists the different 'sects' among them,⁴³ and his conception is not yet of a pan-Indian tradition, if for no other reason than the modern concept of India was yet to be formed.⁴⁴ When Fernandes refers in the title of his *Sumário* to 'dos *bramanes* destas partes da Índia' it is likely that he means the Tamil-speaking region within 'the traditional region of the Indies, from the Indus to Indochina'.⁴⁵

Unlike Fernandes' treatise which, Županov states, was 'more or less discarded as unlearned and of dubious authenticity'⁴⁶ by the Jesuit authorities in Rome, Nobili's works, although not published in his lifetime, were widely read within the Society. Thus although they did not contribute directly to European conceptions of Hinduism in the seventeenth century, they did contribute significantly to the understanding of Nobili's eighteenth-century successors, whose works reached a wide audience both within and beyond the Society.

of 'Ciancaraciarier' (Śaṅkarācārya), 'Madhuva' (Madhva) and Ramanuja (Rāmānuja) respectively – among the idolaters.

⁴¹ Fernandes 1973: 3. In a *Reposta* to Nobili written at about the same time as the *Sumário*, Fernandes again uses the term 'Bramanismo' (Fernandes 1973: 301). This is, to my knowledge, by far the earliest use of a term which the *Oxford English Dictionary* does not attest in English until 1816.

⁴² Županov 1999: 142.

⁴³ Fernandes 1973: 214–6.

⁴⁴ Cf. below, p. 162.

⁴⁵ Edney 1997: 4.

⁴⁶ Županov 1993: 138.